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United Nations

Report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

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Supplement No. 35 (A/48/35)

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LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

18 November 1993

Sir,

I have the honour to enclose herewith the report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for submission to the General Assembly in accordance with paragraph 4 of its resolution 47/64 A of 11 December 1992.

Accept, Sir, the assurances of my highest consideration.

(Signed) Kéba Birane CISSE
Chairman of the Committee on the
Exercise of the Inalienable
Rights of the Palestinian People

His Excellency
Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali
Secretary-General of the United Nations

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People was established by the General Assembly in its resolution 3376 (XXX) of 10 November 1975, in which the Assembly requested the Committee to consider and recommend to it a programme designed to enable the Palestinian people to exercise its inalienable rights as recognized by the Assembly in resolution 3236 (XXIX) of 22 November 1974. During the reporting period, the Committee continued to be composed of 23 Member States as follows: Afghanistan, Belarus, Cuba, Cyprus, Guinea, Guyana, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mali, Malta, Nigeria, Pakistan, Romania, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine and Yugoslavia. 1/

2. The recommendations made by the Committee in its first report to the General Assembly 2/ were first endorsed by the Assembly in resolution 31/20 of 24 November 1976 as a basis for the solution of the question of Palestine. In its subsequent reports 3/ the Committee has continued to stress that a comprehensive, just and lasting solution of the question of Palestine, the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict in the Middle East, must be based on the relevant United Nations resolutions and the following essential principles: withdrawal of Israel from the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem; respect for the right of all States in the region to live in peace within secure and internationally recognized boundaries; and the recognition and exercise of the inalienable national rights of the Palestinian people, primarily the right to self-determination. Each year, the Assembly has endorsed the Committee's recommendations with overwhelming support and has renewed its mandate and expanded it as necessary.

3. The Committee considers that the principled position adopted by the international community with regard to the question of Palestine is beginning to bear fruit at this time of fundamental changes on the international political scene which have brought about a shift from confrontation to cooperation and a renewed determination to resolve long-standing regional conflicts.

4. Having welcomed the peace process initiated at Madrid in 1991, and having followed the subsequent rounds of talks in the year under review, the Committee continued to express concern at the prolonged stalemate and to stress that progress in the negotiations could only be achieved within the framework of respect for international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions.

5. In September 1993, the Committee welcomed the exchange of letters of mutual recognition between the Government of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), and the subsequent signing by representatives of the two sides of the "Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements", providing for initial steps towards Palestinian self-government, the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Jericho and the Gaza Strip and a framework for negotiations leading to a permanent settlement based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). The Committee considers this evolution to be an important step towards the attainment of a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement. It is also the beginning of a difficult transition process which will necessitate the continued vigilance and support of the international community as a whole, and the United Nations in particular, in order to ensure that it will lead to the exercise of the inalienable national rights of the Palestinian people, in line with the Committee's recommendations.

6. At the same time, the Committee remained greatly concerned at the continued grave situation in the occupied Palestinian territory and called on Israel, the occupying Power, to recognize henceforth the applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention to the occupied Palestinian territory and to take immediate measures to implement the provisions of the Convention and to restore respect for human rights. The Committee called in particular on Israel to end the shooting of unarmed demonstrators by the Israeli Defense Force and its undercover activities, which have resulted in summary executions; to release all political prisoners and detainees; and to end all imposition of collective punishments such as curfews, closure of the occupied territory, the destruction or sealing of houses, and deportation of Palestinian civilians; and called for the return of all those deported since 1967.

7. The Committee further called on Israel, pending complete withdrawal from the occupied territory, including Jerusalem, to end immediately its confiscation of Palestinian land and settlement activities, including the building of roads and control over water resources, and to repeal military orders restricting political, social and economic activity by Palestinians. The Committee called upon the High Contracting Parties to the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949, 4/ and upon the United Nations system as a whole, to ensure that Israel abides by the provisions of the Convention and of relevant United Nations resolutions in this regard.

8. The Committee firmly believes that the United Nations has a permanent responsibility with respect to the question of Palestine until it is resolved in all its aspects in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions, and calls on the United Nations and the international community as a whole to intensify its efforts to assist the Palestinian people in building the foundations for the exercise of national sovereignty and thereby ensure a successful outcome of the agreements that have been reached. For its part, as the United Nations organ specifically mandated to promote the attainment of the exercise by the Palestinian people of its inalienable rights, the Committee intends to further strengthen its own efforts in this regard.

II. MANDATE OF THE COMMITTEE

9. The mandate of the Committee for the year 1993 is contained in paragraphs 3 to 5 of General Assembly resolution 47/64 A of 11 December 1992, in which the Assembly:

(a) Requested the Committee to continue to keep under review the situation relating to the question of Palestine, as well as the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Achievement of Palestinian Rights 5/ and to report and make suggestions to the General Assembly or the Security Council, as appropriate;

(b) Authorized the Committee to continue to exert all efforts to promote the implementation of its recommendations, including representation at conferences and meetings and the sending of delegations, to make such adjustments in its approved programme of work as it may consider appropriate and necessary, to give special emphasis to the need to mobilize public opinion in Europe and North America, and to report thereon to the General Assembly at its forty-eighth session and thereafter;

(c) Also requested the Committee to continue to extend its cooperation to non-governmental organizations in their contribution towards heightening international awareness of the facts relating to the question of Palestine and creating a more favourable atmosphere for the full implementation of the recommendations of the Committee, and to take the necessary steps to expand its contacts with those organizations.

10. In its resolution 47/64 B, also of 11 December 1992, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General, inter alia, to provide the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat with the necessary resources to strengthen its programme of research, studies and publications, through the establishment of an adequately staffed and equipped computer-based information system on the question of Palestine, and to ensure that it continues to discharge its tasks, as detailed in previous resolutions, in consultation with the Committee and under its guidance.

11. In its resolution 47/64 C, of 11 December 1992, the General Assembly requested the Department of Public Information, in full cooperation and coordination with the Committee, to continue, with the necessary flexibility as may be required by developments affecting the question of Palestine, its special information programme on the question of Palestine for the biennium 1992-1993, with particular emphasis on public opinion in Europe and North America.

III. ORGANIZATION OF WORK

A. Election of officers

12. At its 195th meeting, on 27 January 1993, the Committee re-elected Mr. Kéba Birane Cissé (Senegal) as Chairman, Mr. Alcibiades J. Hidalgo Basulto (Cuba) as Vice-Chairman and Mr. Victor Camilleri (Malta) as Rapporteur.

13. At its 199th meeting, on 26 July 1993, the Committee elected Mr. Ravan Farhadi (Afghanistan) as Vice-Chairman and Mr. Joseph Cassar (Malta) as Rapporteur following the departure of Mr. Camilleri.

14. At its 196th meeting, on 3 March 1993, the Committee adopted its programme of work for 1993 (A/AC.183/1993/CRP.1) in implementation of its mandate.

B. Participation in the work of the Committee

15. As in previous years, the Committee reconfirmed that all States Members of the United Nations and Permanent Observers to the United Nations desiring to participate in the work of the Committee as observers were welcome to do so. Accordingly, in a letter dated 15 March 1993, the Chairman of the Committee so informed the Secretary-General, who subsequently transmitted the letter, on 26 March 1993, to the States Members of the United Nations and members of the specialized agencies, and to intergovernmental organizations. In accordance with established practice, the Committee also invited Palestine, represented by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), to participate in the work of the Committee as an observer, to attend all its meetings and to make observations and proposals for consideration by the Committee.

16. In 1993, the Committee again welcomed as observers all the States and organizations that had participated in its work in the preceding year. 6/

C. Re-establishment of the Working Group

17. At its 195th meeting, the Committee re-established its Working Group in order to assist in the preparation and expedition of the work of the Committee, on the understanding that any Committee member or observer could participate in its deliberations. 7/ The Working Group was constituted as before under the chairmanship of Mr. Victor Camilleri and later Mr. Joseph Cassar. Mrs. Mitra Visisht (India) was elected Vice-Chairman of the Working Group.

IV. ACTION TAKEN BY THE COMMITTEE

A. Action taken in accordance with General Assembly resolution 47/64 A

1. Review of the situation relating to the question of Palestine and efforts to implement the recommendations of the Committee

18. In accordance with its mandate, the Committee continued to keep under review the situation relating to the question of Palestine and to exert all efforts to promote the implementation of its recommendations as repeatedly endorsed by the General Assembly.

19. In response to urgent developments affecting the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, the Chairman of the Committee, on a number of occasions, brought such developments to the attention of the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council, urging appropriate action in keeping with United Nations resolutions (see paras. 32-38 below).

20. Assisted by the Division for Palestinian Rights, the Committee continued to monitor the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, through the media, the reports of United Nations organs and organizations, as well as through information collected by Governments, non-governmental organizations, individual experts from Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory who participated in meetings held under the auspices of the Committee and other sources.

21. The Committee noted with serious concern that the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, which had been previously reported as grave and volatile, continued to deteriorate alarmingly during the period under review. The reports reaching the Committee left no doubt that the continuation of the occupation, buttressed by armed force, increasingly endangered the very fabric of the Palestinian society and of its livelihood, and resulted in grave human rights violations. In that regard, the Committee welcomed the appointment by the Commission on Human Rights of a Special Rapporteur mandated to investigate Israel's violations of the principles and bases of international law, international humanitarian law and the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949, in the occupied Palestinian territory.

22. Reports reaching the Committee detailed the continuation in the reporting period of harsh repressive measures by the occupation forces and armed settlers, despite the hopes initially engendered by the continuation of the peace process and the election of a new Government in Israel in 1992. The Committee was greatly concerned that the number of Palestinians killed through actions of the armed forces or their agents had risen sharply in the year under review, following attacks in which Israelis had been killed. Since the beginning of the intifadah the total number of Palestinian casualties by shooting, beating or tear gas had risen to 1,240 by August 1993, and the total number injured to an estimated 130,000. Approximately one fourth of the fatalities continued to be children under 16.

23. The Committee also noted with concern that approximately 14,000 Palestinian political prisoners were still being held in Israeli prisons and detention camps, many of them in administrative detention without having been brought to

trial. There continued to be reports of inhuman conditions in the jails and mistreatment of prisoners, including beatings and torture. The Committee noted with alarm that 14 Palestinians had died in custody since the beginning of the intifadah, six of them in Gaza Central Prison.

24. The Committee noted reports that in the period under review there had been an intensification of the previous Government's campaign to pursue persons declared as "wanted" by the authorities, primarily through increased harassment of their families; an increased use of large-scale military operations which utilize excessive force; the use of Military Order No. 1076, issued in April 1992, which permits a seven-year prison term without trial for failure to respond to a summons; and the widespread use of undercover units which have engaged in extra-judicial killings. Military assaults against the homes of fugitives, using large-calibre machine-gun ammunition, anti-tank missiles and dynamite took place in February and April 1993 in the Gaza Strip, rendering hundreds of Palestinians homeless. The Committee deplored the fact that in early October 1993, after the signing of the Declaration of Principles, another similar attack took place, in which the homes of another 18 families in the Gaza Strip were destroyed. Human rights organizations reported that from the beginning of the intifadah to August 1993, over 2,400 homes had been demolished or sealed, over 166,000 trees uprooted, and curfews had been imposed in over 12,000 instances.

25. The Committee has been extremely concerned by the deportation, on 17 December 1992, of over 400 Palestinian civilians from the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem. In a statement adopted on 21 January 1993, the Committee strongly condemned this action by the occupying Power as contrary to the Fourth Geneva Convention and numerous Security Council resolutions. Having taken note of the fact that the Israeli Government allowed some of the deportees to return to their homes, the Committee remains of the view that Israel has yet to implement Security Council resolution 799 (1992) in its entirety.

26. The Committee was also alarmed by the fact that in July 1993 the persistent Israeli air, navy and ground artillery assaults against vast areas in Lebanon caused the displacement of and high number of casualties and suffering among the Palestinians living in refugee camps of Beddawi and Nahr el-Bared in northern Lebanon, and Ein el-Hilweh, Mieh Mieh and Rashidieh in southern Lebanon.

27. The Committee noted that the settlement activity in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, had continued. In an important policy change, the Government had made an effort to prioritize settlement objectives with respect to some areas in the occupied territory. Construction in the critical region of Greater Jerusalem, however, proceeded apace, with ambitious plans considered by the Government to link the city centre with the southern bloc of settlements. It was reported that among those plans is the completion of construction of the Jerusalem-Efrat highway, an estimated $42 million project intended to link the Jerusalem suburb of Gilo with the Etzion bloc of settlements and benefit the economic development of the so-called "bedroom suburbs" of Jerusalem. In this regard, the Committee reaffirmed that the settlement policies and practices of the occupying Power are in violation of article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention and resolutions of the Security Council, which have declared the settlements illegal and have called for an end to such activities.

28. Further, the Committee noted with concern that the closure, in March 1993, of the West Bank, including Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip had a particularly negative effect on the Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem, who became almost totally isolated and deprived of any freedom of movement. This measure has also divided the occupied Palestinian territory into four parts, separating the southern and northern parts of the West Bank and isolating the Gaza Strip and Jerusalem. In some areas, road blocks have created enclaves, depriving the Palestinians living in them of access to their families, places of work, schools, medical care facilities, places of worship in Jerusalem and utility services.

29. The Committee also noted with the greatest concern the rapid worsening of the environmental situation in the occupied Palestinian territory. The ecological problems of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip stem mostly from the over-exploitation by the Israeli authorities and the settlers of the available water resources, the lack of adequate waste management system and the destruction of thousands of olive and fruit trees. The contamination and degradation of the environment is especially severe in the Gaza Strip, where the environmental problem has acquired crisis dimensions. It has been described as representing a direct health threat to the population, the children in particular. In addition, the poor condition of water distribution networks, and considerable water losses hindered the economic development of the Palestinian households and affected their livelihood.

30. The economic and social situation in the occupied territory has been a source of great concern to the Committee. The Palestinian economy, which has witnessed significant structural changes over 26 years of Israeli occupation, was made dependent on and inferior to the highly capitalized and technologically advanced Israeli economy. The Committee noted that continued human rights violations by the Israeli authorities in the occupied territory, control of water resources, the demolition of houses and other property, and the destruction of olive trees and crops have further exacerbated the living conditions of the Palestinian population.

31. The Committee noted the economic assistance and development programmes and projects undertaken by the organizations and agencies of the United Nations system. These endeavours are acquiring special significance in the anticipation of full-fledged Palestinian statehood. With a view to contributing to ongoing efforts, the Committee organized a Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian people. The Committee wishes to draw particular attention to the report and recommendations of the Seminar (see paras. 48-50). The Committee is of the view that the international assistance programme would be enhanced by greater and more effective coordination among the organizations of the United Nations system and between them and other donors, as well as by the elaboration of an overall strategy framework to guide their work. In this connection, the Committee welcomed the statement made by the Secretary-General, on 1 September 1993, that the United Nations is prepared to offer the parties every assistance within the context of the agreement between them with the aim of contributing to the establishment of peace in the Middle East in accordance with United Nations resolutions, as well as the subsequent appointment of a high-level task force to focus on the economic and social development of Jericho and the Gaza Strip and to prepare proposals for the Secretary-General before the start of the forty-eighth session of the General Assembly. The Committee welcomed the recent pledging conference that took place on 1 October 1993 in Washington, D.C., on assistance to the Palestinian people, and stressed the importance of an effective role by the United Nations in this regard. The report of the task

force, entitled "Supporting the transition: an immediate response of the United Nations to the interim period in the West Bank and Gaza Strip" was made available to participants at this meeting.

2. Reactions to developments affecting the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people

(a) Communications to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

32. The Chairman of the Committee on a number of occasions drew the attention of the Secretary-General and of the President of the Security Council to urgent developments in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem. The Chairman condemned the mass deportations and the indiscriminate shooting of demonstrators by the army, as well as the intensification and expansion of collective punishment such as the imposition of curfews, the closure of the occupied territory and mass detentions of Palestinian civilians, including minors. The Chairman pointed out that those policies and practices were in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention, and requested that Israel accept the de jure applicability of the Convention to all the territories occupied since 1967 and abide scrupulously by the provisions of that Convention and relevant Security Council resolutions. The Chairman appealed urgently to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council and to all parties concerned, in particular the High Contracting Parties to the Convention, to take all necessary measures for ensuring the safety and protection of the Palestinian civilians under occupation and to intensify all efforts towards the achievement of a peaceful settlement.

33. The following letters from the Chairman of the Committee to the Secretary-General were circulated as official documents of the General Assembly, under the agenda item entitled "Question of Palestine", and of the Security Council: (a) letter dated 17 December 1992 (A/47/793-S/24974); (b) letter dated 21 January 1993 (A/47/874-S/25136); (c) letter dated 18 February 1993 (A/47/893-S/25311); (d) letter dated 23 March 1993 (A/47/911-S/25464); and (e) letter dated 28 May 1993 (A/47/959-S/25862).

(b) Action taken within the Security Council

34. The Committee followed closely the activities of the Security Council on matters pertaining to the Committee's mandate and participated in Council deliberations as necessary.

35. In his letter dated 18 December 1992, the Permanent Representative of Lebanon to the United Nations requested a meeting of the Security Council to discuss the grave situation, which had occurred as a result of the deportation of more than 400 Palestinians into Lebanese territory. Following this request, at its 3151st meeting, on 18 December 1992, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 799 (1992), in which, inter alia, it strongly condemned the action taken by Israel, the occupying Power, to deport hundreds of Palestinian civilians, and expressed its firm opposition to any such deportation by Israel; reaffirmed the applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 12 August 1949 to all the Palestinian territories occupied by Israel since 1967, including Jerusalem, and affirmed that deportation of civilians constituted a contravention of its obligations under the Convention; demanded that Israel, the occupying Power, ensure the safe and immediate return to the occupied

territories of all those deported; and requested the Secretary-General to consider dispatching a representative to the area to follow up with the Israeli Government with regard to this serious situation and to report to the Security Council.

36. Pursuant to the request contained in Security Council resolution 799 (1992), the Secretary-General, on 25 January 1993, submitted a report to the Council, 8/ outlining his efforts in that regard, including three missions to the region by his special representatives, Mr. James O. C. Jonah and Mr. Chinmaya Rajaninath Gharekhan, aimed at achieving a solution of the situation with respect to the Palestinian deportees. As the efforts were inconclusive and Israel refused to ensure the safe and immediate return of the deportees as demanded in resolution 799 (1992), the Secretary-General recommended that the Council take whatever measures were required to ensure that its unanimous decision, as set out in the resolution, was respected.

37. Following the issuance by the Secretary-General of the aforementioned report, the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations, in a letter dated 9 February 1993 addressed to the President of the Security Council, outlined the decision taken by the Government of Israel, at a special session of the Cabinet held on 1 February 1993, regarding the Palestinian deportees. 9/

38. In a letter dated 22 March 1993 addressed to the President of the Council, the Permanent Representative of Egypt to the United Nations, in his capacity as Chairman of the Arab Group and on behalf of its members, requested a meeting of the Council to consider the serious situation in the occupied Palestinian territories, including Jerusalem. 10/ In view of the lack of action by the Security Council on the Secretary-General's report, the Bureau of the Committee felt compelled to take action to register their concern and met with the President of the Council on 24 March 1993. The Committee noted that concern in this regard was also expressed by, inter alia, the Group of Arab States, the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries. These requests, however, did not result in a meeting of the Council.

3. Action taken by the Committee to promote a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement in accordance with United Nations resolutions

39. By its resolution 47/64 D of 11 December 1992, the General Assembly reaffirmed the urgent need to achieve a just and comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict, the core of which is the question of Palestine. It welcomed the ongoing peace process, which started at Madrid in October 1991, and expressed the hope that it would lead to the establishment of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the region. The Assembly also expressed the need for the United Nations to play a more active and expanded role in the current peace process. It considered that the convening, at a certain stage, of an International Peace Conference on the Middle East, under the auspices of the United Nations, with the participation of all parties to the conflict, including the Palestine Liberation Organization, on an equal footing, and the five permanent members of the Security Council, based on Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people, primarily the right to self-determination, would contribute to the promotion of peace in the region. The Assembly reaffirmed the following principles for the achievement of comprehensive peace: the withdrawal of Israel from the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem, and

from the other occupied Arab territories; guaranteeing arrangements for peace and security of all States in the region, including those named in resolution 181 (II) of 29 November 1947, within secure and internationally recognized boundaries; resolving the problem of the Palestine refugees in conformity with General Assembly resolution 194 (III) of 11 December 1948 and subsequent relevant resolutions; dismantling the Israeli settlements in the territories occupied since 1967; and guaranteeing freedom of access to Holy Places, religious buildings and sites. It noted the expressed desire and endeavours to place the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem, under the supervision of the United Nations for a transitional period or, alternatively, to provide international protection for the Palestinian people there, as part of the peace process; and requested the Secretary-General to continue his efforts with the parties concerned, and in consultation with the Security Council, for the promotion of peace in the region, and to submit progress reports on developments in this matter.

40. Taking into consideration that resolution, the Committee, in adopting its programme of work for 1993, decided to continue to give priority to the promotion of a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict, the core of which is the question of Palestine, including the convening, at a certain stage, of an International Peace Conference on the Middle East, under the auspices of the United Nations.

41. During the period under review, the Committee continued to express support for the Arab-Israeli negotiations within the framework of the Madrid peace process and to call on the parties concerned to intensify their efforts to overcome the obstacles and achieve positive results. The Committee reiterated that the United Nations has a role to play in the process, as those negotiations are based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), which have long been regarded as cornerstones for a comprehensive settlement in the Middle East. The Committee noted that the United Nations had been invited by the sponsors of the Madrid process to participate in the multilateral negotiations on Middle East regional issues and that the Secretary-General had appointed a special representative. The Committee expressed its appreciation to the Secretary-General for his efforts to make a concrete contribution to those negotiations.

42. On 16 September 1993, as it was completing its programme of work for the year, the Committee was apprised of the new developments culminating in the signing of a declaration of principles by representatives of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization, providing for initial steps towards Palestinian self-government, the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Jericho and the Gaza Strip and a framework for negotiations leading to a permanent settlement based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) (see A/48/486-S/26560, annex, signed by the United States, the Russian Federation, Israel and the Permanent Observer of Palestine). The Committee welcomed and supported this evolution as an important first step towards a just and comprehensive peace in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions and pledged to intensify its efforts in that direction in the coming year. The Committee also welcomed other significant and concrete steps, including the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations in Taba and Cairo, Egypt, and the recent partial release by the Israeli Government of Palestinian political prisoners.

43. The Committee was encouraged by the continued international support for its position and objectives, as reflected in decisions adopted by United Nations bodies, other intergovernmental organizations, and in the documents adopted at

United Nations seminars and meetings of non-governmental organizations on the question of Palestine held under the auspices of the Committee.

4. Attendance at international conferences and meetings

44. In accordance with its mandate, the Committee was represented at the following international meetings during the period since its previous report to the General Assembly:

(a) Twenty-first Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, held at Karachi, Pakistan, from 24 to 29 April 1993;

(b) Fifty-eighth ordinary session of the Council of Ministers of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), held at Cairo from 21 to 26 June 1993, and the twenty-ninth ordinary session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of OAU, held at Cairo from 28 to 30 June 1993.

5. Action taken by United Nations bodies, the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and intergovernmental organizations

45. The Committee continued to follow with great interest the activities relating to the question of Palestine of United Nations bodies, the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and intergovernmental organizations. The Committee noted especially the support of the international community for the ongoing peace process and for the declaration of principles of September 1993, and the hope that it would result in a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement in accordance with United Nations principles and resolutions. The Committee also noted the great concern about the continuing violations of human rights by Israel, the occupying Power, and about its settlements policy, and the sense of urgency with which the international community addressed the need to support the Palestinian people in the difficult transition period ahead and to provide the necessary financial and other assistance for the exercise of Palestinian national sovereignty. The Committee took particular note of the following documents:

(a) Final communiqué of the sixth extraordinary session of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, held at Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, on 1 and 2 December 1992 (A/47/765-S/24930, annex);

(b) Declaration on the Middle East Peace Process, adopted by the Council of Ministers of the European Communities at its meeting held at Edinburgh on 11 and 12 December 1992 (A/47/790-S/24968, annex);

(c) Statement on the situation in Israel and the occupied territories, issued by the European Community and its member States on 18 December 1992 (A/47/841-S/25005, annex);

(d) Final communiqué adopted by the Supreme Council of the Gulf Cooperation Council at its thirteenth session, held at Abu Dhabi from 21 to 23 December 1992 (A/47/845-S/25020, annex);

(e) Final declaration adopted at the Arab Coordination Meeting, held at Cairo, on 24 December 1992 (S/25018);

(f) Statement adopted by the Committee on Palestine of the Organization of the Islamic Conference at its meeting held in New York on 30 December 1992 (A/47/850-S/25043, annex);

(g) Final declaration adopted by the Bureau of the Sixth Islamic Summit enlarged to the Chairmen of the Standing Committees at its meeting held at Dakar on 11 January 1993 (A/47/866-S/25096, annex, paras. 1-16);

(h) Resolutions adopted by the Commission on Human Rights at its forty-ninth session (resolutions 1993/2 A and B, 1993/3 and 1993/4); 11/

(i) Final communiqué and resolutions adopted by the 21st Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers held at Karachi, Pakistan, from 25 to 29 April 1993;

(j) Declaration adopted by the Committee on Palestine of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries at ministerial level on 12 May 1993 at Bali, Indonesia (A/47/957-S/25858, annex);

(k) Statement of the Ministerial Council of the Gulf Cooperation Council at its forty-seventh session, held at Riyadh on 7 and 8 June 1993 (A/48/205-S/25923, annex);

(l) Resolutions adopted by the Council of Ministers of the Organization of African Unity at its fifty-eighth ordinary session, held at Cairo from 21 to 26 June 1993 (A/48/322, annex I, CM/Res. 1452 (LVIII) and 1453 (LVIII));

(m) Resolutions and decisions adopted by the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 1993, held at Geneva from 28 June to 30 July 1993 (resolutions 1993/15, 1993/52 and 1993/78 and decision 1993/253);

(n) Statement issued on 13 September 1993 by the Presidency of the European Community on the peace process in the Middle East (A/47/1019-S/26447, annex);

(o) Communiqué issued by the Chairman of the Sixth Summit of the Organization of the Islamic Conference and President of Senegal (A/47/1017, annex);

(p) Communiqué adopted by the Ministerial Council of the League of Arab States at its second regular session, held at Cairo from 19 to 21 September 1993;

(q) Statement of the Committee on Palestine of the Non-Aligned Movement at its Ministerial Meeting, held at New York on 28 September 1993 (A/48/455-S/26502, annex);

(r) Final communiqué adopted by the annual Coordination Meeting of the Organization of the Islamic Conference at the ministerial level, held in New York, on 29 September 1993.

B. Action taken by the Committee and the Division for Palestinian Rights in accordance with General Assembly resolutions 47/64 A and B

46. In its programme of work for the year 1993, the Committee decided to continue organizing regional seminars and symposia and meetings of non-governmental organizations and its programme of studies and publications in accordance with existing mandates and budgetary provisions. The Committee, as in the past, decided to invite Palestinian and Israeli personalities to participate in all events organized under its auspices with a view to promoting a constructive debate, mutual understanding and a concrete and action-oriented analysis of the most important issues relating to the question of Palestine. The Committee also decided to focus on the following priority issues:

(a) The urgency of promoting measures by the Security Council, the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention and all other parties concerned to ensure the full implementation of Security Council resolution 799 (1992);

(b) The imperative need to end human rights violations and ensure the safety and international protection of Palestinian civilians in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, in accordance with the Fourth Geneva Convention and Security Council resolutions, in particular resolution 681 (1990);

(c) The adverse impact of Israel's confiscation of Palestinian land and settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, on the achievement of Palestinian rights and of a just settlement of the question of Palestine, and the urgent need to take measures in this regard;

(d) The deteriorating economic situation of the Palestinian people and the need for international assistance to promote the independent social and economic development of the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, in preparation for the full exercise of national sovereignty in accordance with relevant United Nations resolutions;

(e) The promotion of a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict, the core of which is the question of Palestine, including the convening, at a certain stage, of an international peace conference on the Middle East, under the auspices of the United Nations in accordance with General Assembly resolution 47/64 D of 11 December 1992.

1. Seminars

47. Regional seminars in Europe, North America, Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean were included in the calendar of meetings to be organized under the auspices of the Committee. For reasons beyond its control, the Committee was unable to hold an event for the Latin American and Caribbean region in the period under review.

(a) United Nations Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People

48. The Committee decided to devote its Seminar for the European region to the theme of "Assistance to the Palestinian People", in response to the request made by the General Assembly in its resolution 47/170 of 22 December 1992. The

Seminar was held at United Nations, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Headquarters in Paris from 26 to 29 April 1993.

49. The Seminar considered five topics: (a) Assistance to the Palestinian people: priorities and needs; (b) The role and experience of the United Nations system; (c) The role and experience of regional organizations; (d) The role and experience of countries involved in assistance projects in the occupied Palestinian territory; and (e) The role and experience of Palestinian and international non-governmental organizations. Presentations were made by experts and representatives of organizations of the United Nations system, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and donor countries.

50. The Committee noted that the participants in the Seminar were of the view that a comprehensive Palestinian national development plan would be a major factor in achieving the independent development of the Palestinian people. They stressed the importance of undertaking coordination between the various donors and organizations and agencies of the United Nations system, and the Palestinian central authority. They were of the view that the international assistance programmes would be enhanced, among other things, by the elaboration of an overall strategy framework to guide their work. They were also of the view that international assistance should be targeted and delivered so as to meet Palestinian priorities, to help loosen the grip of the occupation and to promote the independent development of the Palestinian people. Participants stressed that the question of coordination of international assistance needed to be discussed urgently by all concerned and requested the Committee to convey to the Secretary-General their recommendation that he convene a meeting of organizations of the United Nations system, together with PLO officials, to consider appropriate mechanisms to coordinate and channel assistance and to decide on priorities. The request was conveyed by the Chairman in a letter transmitting the report of the Seminar, which was issued as a document of the General Assembly and of the Economic and Social Council (A/48/168-E/1993/62). Further details on the Seminar are contained in annex II.

(b) Ninth United Nations North American Seminar on the Question of Palestine

51. The Ninth United Nations North American Seminar on the Question of Palestine was held at United Nations Headquarters in New York on 28 and 29 June 1993. Mindful of the need to intensify the role of the United Nations in the various aspects of the question of Palestine, the Committee decided to devote the Seminar to the general theme "Priorities for United Nations action".

52. The participants in the Seminar discussed three topics: (a) The United Nations and the implementation of international human rights instruments and relevant Security Council resolutions; (b) The United Nations and the promotion of the economic development of the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem; and (c) The United Nations and the peace process.

53. The Committee noted that Seminar participants deplored the fact that Israel, the occupying Power, continued to reject the jurisdiction of the international community with regard to its treatment of Palestinian civilians. The Seminar also addressed the current and future economic needs of the occupied territory. The participants exchanged views on the current economic situation in the occupied territory, as well as on ways of promoting sustainable development in the course of and after the transitional period. Special emphasis was laid on the importance of an active role of the United Nations, the

Security Council and the Secretary-General in ensuring a successful outcome of the peace process. Further details on the Seminar are contained in annex III.

(c) Seventh United Nations African Seminar on the Question of Palestine

54. The Seventh United Nations African Seminar on the Question of Palestine was held at Dakar, Senegal, from 30 August to 3 September 1993, jointly with the Fourth United Nations African Non-Governmental Organizations Symposium on the Question of Palestine. The Committee expressed its deep appreciation to the Government of Senegal for having provided the venue for these important events and for its unstinting support for the work of the Committee.

55. The theme of the Seminar was "Africa, the Middle East and the Question of Palestine". The participants in the Seminar discussed the following four topics: (a) Towards a just solution of the question of Palestine; (b) Building peace in Jerusalem - the Holy City of three religions; (c) Towards self-determination and statehood; and (d) The need to revive the economy in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem.

56. Participants were apprised of the turning point in the peace process, which took place while the meeting was in progress, and accordingly devoted considerable discussion to analysing the situation on the ground in light of new developments and to making recommendations for the difficult transition process ahead. They expressed concern at the Israeli policy of annexation and judaization of Jerusalem and its separation in recent months from the rest of the occupied territory, and stressed that a solution to the problem of Jerusalem was essential for the achievement of a lasting peace. The participants emphasized that a revival of the Palestinian economy and its independent development were essential underpinnings for the full exercise of the right to self-determination of the Palestinian people and the building of an independent State. They stressed the need for the creation of an appropriate mechanism to undertake coordination between various donors and the United Nations system organizations and agencies, and the PLO. It was suggested that the Committee organize under its auspices round-tables on economic revitalization of the occupied Palestinian territory, which would be of particular importance in the transitional period. The participants also reaffirmed the permanent responsibility of the United Nations towards a just and comprehensive solution of the question of Palestine and stressed the essential role of the Committee. Details on the Seminar and its conclusions and recommendations are contained in annex VII.

2. Cooperation with non-governmental organizations

57. The Committee, in accordance with its mandate under General Assembly resolution 47/64 A, continued to cooperate and expand contacts with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) active on the question of Palestine. During 1993, the Division for Palestinian Rights, in consultation with the Committee and under its guidance, organized regional non-governmental organization symposia in North America, Africa and Europe, and an international meeting of non-governmental organizations. The Committee noted that non-governmental organizations had continued their efforts to provide assistance and support to the Palestinian people under occupation and to promote a just and comprehensive peace. The Committee affirmed the importance of the contribution by the NGO community to international efforts on behalf of the Palestinian

people and considered that their support would become even more necessary during the future transition period.

(a) Tenth United Nations North American Regional Non-Governmental Organizations Symposium on the Question of Palestine

58. The Tenth United Nations North American Regional Non-Governmental Organizations Symposium on the Question of Palestine was held at United Nations Headquarters in New York from 30 June to 2 July 1993, immediately following the North American Regional Seminar, in accordance with the practice established by the Committee in previous years. The programme for the Symposium was elaborated in consultations between the Committee and the North American Coordinating Committee for Non-Governmental Organizations on the Question of Palestine at a preparatory meeting held at United Nations Headquarters in New York, on 25 and 26 January 1993.

59. The theme of the Symposium was "Building for peace and Palestine: priorities for the second decade of the NGO movement". The programme included four panels: "Building for peace and Palestine: priorities for the second decade of the NGO movement"; "Rights, resources, refugees: the need for protection"; "Ending the occupation: a prelude to peace and security"; and "NGO priorities for the second decade". The programme also included several workshops.

60. The Committee noted that the North American non-governmental organizations had taken steps to strengthen the organizational framework for their activity and that six Standing Committees had been created and had met to discuss ways and means for coordinating the efforts of non-governmental organizations in the coming year. The Standing Committees had drawn up programmes of action to serve as guidelines for the future and to be brought to the next annual symposium for evaluation. Additional details on the Symposium are contained in annex IV.

(b) Seventh United Nations European Regional Non-Governmental Organizations Symposium on the Question of Palestine

61. The Seventh United Nations European Regional Non-Governmental Organizations Symposium on the Question of Palestine was held at Vienna on 23 and 24 August 1993 and was followed by the International Non-Governmental Organization Meeting, which was held from 25 to 27 August 1993. The Committee expressed its appreciation to the Government of Austria for having provided the facilities of the Austria Centre for the two meetings and for the important contribution it had made to the successful holding of these events.

62. The programmes for the Symposium and the Meeting were elaborated by the Committee in consultation with the European Coordinating Committee for Non-Governmental Organizations on the Question of Palestine and the International Coordinating Committee for Non-Governmental Organizations on the Question of Palestine at a preparatory meeting held at the United Nations Office at Geneva on 5 and 6 April 1993.

63. The Symposium had for its theme "The Middle East peace process: Palestinian rights and development - a challenge to Europe". The topic of the plenary session was "Palestine - the current situation". Two workshops were organized, one dealing with Palestinian national and human rights, and the other with Palestinian development. Details on the Symposium and the Declaration adopted are contained in annex V.

(c) Tenth United Nations International Non-Governmental Organizations Meeting on the Question of Palestine

64. The theme of the Tenth United Nations International Non-Governmental Organizations Meeting on the Question of Palestine was "Renewing the United Nations NGO commitment to Palestinian national and human rights". The participants focused on five topics: (a) Political update: obstacles to peace; (b) Urgent quest for independence: protection and end of occupation; (c) Back to the future - a decade of United Nations/NGO networking; (d) NGO forum: who is doing what?; and (e) Future strategies and the role of NGOs. Further details on the Meeting and the Declaration adopted are contained in annex VI.

(d) Seventh United Nations African Non-Governmental Organizations Symposium on the Question of Palestine

65. The Seventh United Nations African Non-Governmental Organizations Symposium on the Question of Palestine was held at Dakar, Senegal, from 30 August to 3 September 1993, together with the Seminar (see paras. 54-56) and shared with it the main theme "Africa, the Middle East and the Question of Palestine", the round-table discussions and the adoption of the final concluding document. Additionally, the following two workshops were organized for non-governmental organizations: "Action by African non-governmental organizations to promote efforts to put an end to Israel's violation of human rights of the Palestinian people" and "Mobilization and networking by non-governmental organizations to promote a just, comprehensive and lasting solution to the question of Palestine". The Committee noted that the participating non-governmental organizations had taken steps to strengthen their regional coordination. Further details on the symposium are contained in annex VII.

3. Research, monitoring, and publications

66. The Committee noted with appreciation that the Division for Palestinian Rights, in accordance with its mandate, continued to respond to information requests and to prepare and disseminate the following publications:

(a) Monthly bulletins covering action by the Committee, other United Nations organs, organizations and agencies, as well as intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations concerned with the question of Palestine;

(b) Monthly monitoring reports on developments relating to the question of Palestine, as reflected in the Arabic, English and Hebrew press, for the use of the Committee;

(c) Reports of seminars, regional NGO symposia and the international NGO meetings;

(d) Compilations of statements, declarations, documents and other material regarding the settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the question of Palestine, for the use of the Committee.

67. The Committee noted that the Division was working on updating a 1980 publication entitled "Acquisition of land in Palestine". The Division was also updating a 1979 publication on the observance of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

68. The following publications were also issued by the Division: Resolutions and decisions of the General Assembly and the Security Council relating to the question of Palestine: 1992 (A/AC.183/L.2/Add.13) and a special bulletin on the commemoration of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People in 1992.

4. United Nations information system on the question of Palestine (UNISPAL)

69. During 1993, in order to strengthen its programme of research, monitoring and publications, the Division, in cooperation with relevant technical services of the Secretariat, continued the work on the establishment of a computer-based information system on the question of Palestine (UNISPAL), as requested by the Committee and endorsed by the General Assembly in resolution 47/64 B of 11 December 1992. The Committee noted with appreciation that the initial equipment and technical staff would be available in the Division by mid-October and called for intensified efforts to make the system operational as soon as possible. The Committee also requested that necessary provision for the further development of the system be made in the 1994-1995 budget. The Committee stressed the importance and usefulness of UNISPAL for the work of the Committee and of the United Nations, as well as of other members of the international community.

5. International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People

70. The International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People was observed on 29 November 1992 at United Nations Headquarters in New York and at the United Nations Offices at Geneva and Vienna. The Committee noted with appreciation that the International Day had also been observed in 1992 in many other cities throughout the world.

V. ACTION TAKEN BY THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INFORMATION IN ACCORDANCE WITH GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION 47/64 C

71. The Department of Public Information continued to provide press coverage of all meetings of relevant United Nations bodies, including the Security Council and the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. Additional press releases were issued containing the texts of the Secretary-General's statements relating to the question of Palestine and the situation in the occupied Arab territories. A total of 47 English and 43 French press releases were issued on the subject.

72. The UN Chronicle quarterly magazine continued to publish stories relating to Palestinian issues, including Security Council actions and results of special meetings and seminars.

73. The Department's Public Inquiries Unit responded to 324 requests for information on Palestine. In addition, the subject was included in the presentation made to visitors taking the guided tour of Headquarters. From January through August 1993, visitors numbered 330,000. The Group Programmes and Community Liaison Unit of the Department arranged briefings on Palestine by Secretariat officials and delegations members for groups visiting Headquarters.

74. The Department continued to distribute its publications, including Building for Peace in the Middle East: An Israeli-Palestinian Dialogue, a booklet based on the proceedings of the International Encounter for European Journalists on the Question of Palestine, organized by the Department at Lisbon in September 1992; and a revised edition of For the Rights of the Palestinians: The Work of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. In the first eight months of the year, the Department distributed a total of 17,994 copies of these and other publications on the question of Palestine in Arabic, English, French, German, Russian and Spanish.

75. The Department initiated the production of several new publications: Jerusalem: Visions of Reconciliation, resulting from the Athens Encounter for Greek Journalists (April 1993); Promoting a Culture for Peace in the Middle East, based on the London International Encounter for European Journalists (June 1993); and a UN Focus on the above-mentioned London Encounter.

76. The Department cooperated with Point du Jour, a French production company, in producing a two-hour video documentary on the history of Palestine from the end of the Ottoman Empire to the present time. The Department is currently producing a 30-minute version of that documentary to highlight United Nations involvement in the question of Palestine as well as the struggle of the Palestinian people to achieve its rights.

77. The Department covered various aspects of the question of Palestine and related issues in weekly radio news magazines and feature programmes. Highlights of topics covered included the deportation of 400 Palestinians, on 17 December 1992, from the occupied Palestinian territory and related action by the Security Council and the Secretary-General, as well as initiatives taken by Arab States and non-aligned countries in that respect. Other programmes covered appeals by the Chairman of the Committee on the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for protection of the population in the occupied territories and the debate of the Human Rights Commission on Israel's decision to deport the Palestinians. The Department also produced a number of feature programmes

devoted to the question of Palestine, including: "Assistance to the Palestinian People"; "International Protection of Palestinian Refugees"; and "An Arab Position for the 1994 World Conference on Population and Development: What about Women?". These programmes were produced in Arabic, Bangla, English, French, Hindi, Indonesian, Kiswahili, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish and Urdu.

78. In cooperation with the Government of Greece, the Department sponsored an Encounter for Greek Journalists, held at Athens from 27 to 28 April. The theme was "Jerusalem: visions of reconciliation". The issues of sovereignty over the city of Jerusalem, municipal responsibilities and tangible confidence-building measures were addressed. The dialogue was part of ongoing efforts of the international community to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East. The Encounter was opened by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Greece and moderated by the Chief of the Anti-Apartheid, Decolonization and Palestine Programmes Section of the Department.

79. The Athens Encounter brought together 11 international expert panellists. The Palestinian and Israeli panellists were: Sami Musallam, Director of the Office of the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO); Yael Dayan, member of the Israeli Knesset; Moshe Amirav, member of the City Council of Jerusalem; Sari Nusseibeh, member of the Steering Committee of the Palestinian Negotiating Team of Jerusalem; Albert Aghazarian, adviser to the Palestinian Negotiating Team and Director of Public Relations, Bir Zeit University, Ramallah, West Bank; Hanna Seniora, publisher of Al Fajr, Jerusalem; Ruth Lapidoth, Professor of International Law, Hebrew University of Jerusalem; and Idith Zertal, Columnist, Ha'aretz Network. Attending the Encounter were some 60 representatives of Greek media organizations and the Athens-based foreign corps, as well as 20 expert observers and members of the diplomatic corps.

80. In cooperation with the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and with the support of The Guardian, the Department sponsored an International Encounter for European Journalists on the Question of Palestine, held in London from 9 to 11 June 1993. The theme of the Encounter was "promoting a culture for peace in the Middle East". Issues related to cultural obstacles to peace, the role of national authorities, the media and intellectuals in promoting mutual recognition and respect and confidence-building measures were explored. The Encounter was opened by the Minister of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and moderated by the Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva. Prominent Palestinian and Israeli personalities and European and other experts served as panellists.

81. The Palestinian and Israeli panellists participating in the London Encounter were: Avigdor Feldman, Member of the Board of Directors of Betselem, a human rights advocacy group in Israel; Major-General Shlomo Gazit, former Director of Israeli Military Intelligence and Senior Fellow at the Jaffee Centre for Strategic Studies; Khalil Hindi, Palestinian representative at the Multilateral Negotiations on Economic Development and Professor of Economics at Manchester University, United Kingdom; Asa Kasher, Professor of Philosophy, Tel Aviv University; Yossi Olmert, former Director of the Israeli Government Press Office; Afif Safieh, Head of the PLO Delegation in the United Kingdom; Hanna Seniora, Publisher of Al-Fajr, Jerusalem; Nabeel Shaath, Adviser to the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the PLO; and Ephraim Sneh, Member of the Israeli Knesset. Joining in the discussion were senior journalists and other media representatives from the United Kingdom, Europe, and the Middle East. Taking

place on the eve of the resumption, in Washington, D.C., of the tenth round of the Middle East peace talks, which opened on 15 June 1993, the encounter received extensive international press coverage.

82. Coverage of United Nations activities related to the question of Palestine was provided on an ongoing basis by the network of United Nations information centres (UNICs). The centres produced and distributed newsletters, press releases and television news programmes, and regularly briefed media representatives. The staff organized film screenings, gave lectures and translated and disseminated publications and posters produced both by the Department of Public Information and the Division for Palestinian Rights. Several United Nations information centres and services organized seminars, commemorative meetings and round-tables on the question of Palestine. The information centre at Manila, in cooperation with the Embassy of Palestine at Manila, formed a special organizational committee for the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, which decided, among other things, to hold a national art competition on Palestinian rights. The information centre in Paris assisted the Division for Palestinian Rights in organizing a seminar on assistance to the Palestinian people. The information centres in London and Athens provided full support services to the Department of Public Information for the above-mentioned Encounters.

83. The Department continued to feature and distribute United Nations information materials, documents and press releases on the question of Palestine to representatives of non-governmental organizations. These included all documents disseminated by the Division for Palestinian Rights, the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

84. Additionally, and as foreseen in paragraph 31.13 of the programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993, 12/ preparations were under way for a Fact-Finding News Mission for Journalists to the Middle East and an Encounter for Journalists, designed to reinforce the Secretary-General's efforts to support the momentum in the Middle East peace process.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COMMITTEE

85. The Committee welcomed the peace process started at Madrid in October 1991. In September 1993, the Committee welcomed the exchange of letters of mutual recognition between the Government of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), and the subsequent signing by representatives of the two sides of the "Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements", as an important step towards the attainment of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in accordance with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and other relevant United Nations resolutions. The Committee calls for intensified support and assistance by the international community to the Palestinian people under its recognized leadership, the Palestine Liberation Organization, in order to ensure the successful implementation of the agreements reached.

86. The Committee reaffirms once again the permanent responsibility of the United Nations with respect to the question of Palestine until it is resolved in all its aspects. The Committee believes that the United Nations, which is playing a central and increasing role in helping to solve many of the world's conflicts, has an essential contribution to make to building peace in the Middle East region. The Committee stresses the need for the full engagement of the United Nations in the peace process and in the process of building the forthcoming Palestinian National Authority as well as in providing broad assistance to the Palestinian people in all needed fields.

87. As the organ of the General Assembly dealing with the question of Palestine, the Committee believes that it can make a valuable and positive contribution to United Nations endeavours during the transitional period by mobilizing international opinion and action for its successful outcome and in support of the Palestinian people until a final settlement is achieved. The Committee, accordingly, proposes to devote a major part of its future programme of work to making a concrete contribution in this regard with the assistance of the Division for Palestinian Rights. The Committee calls on the General Assembly to express its support for the work of the Committee and the Division in order to facilitate their task, and would welcome a consensus in this regard.

88. The Committee considers that a broadening of its membership to include countries that support its objectives but have not hitherto participated in its work, would greatly enhance the contribution of the General Assembly to the efforts to promote peace at this important stage.

89. The Committee considers that the following priority tasks require immediate and sustained attention in its programme of work for the coming year:

(a) Promoting support for the ongoing peace process and for the "Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-government Arrangements", and following closely the developments and monitoring the situation on the ground in order to promote the effective implementation of the agreements reached and the full realization of Palestinian rights;

(b) Promoting intensified assistance to the Palestinian people by the United Nations system as a whole, as well as other donors, for immediate relief and for nation-building;

(c) Encouraging constructive consideration and debate of the major issues to be negotiated at a later stage with a view to promoting a final settlement based on international legitimacy in accordance with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and other relevant United Nations resolutions.

90. The Committee believes that the collection, exchange and dissemination of accurate and timely information are of great importance in these endeavours, and reaffirms the essential role of the Division for Palestinian Rights as a focal point in this regard. The Committee welcomes the initial establishment in the Division of the computer-based United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine (UNISPAL) and attaches great importance to the early and effective implementation of the system in all its aspects and its further development to meet evolving needs. The Committee requests the Division to include in the system all relevant documentary, analytical and statistical information and to cooperate with other users and sources of information with a view to making the system as comprehensive and useful as possible.

91. The Committee considers that non-governmental organizations have played a significant and constructive role over the years in solidarity with the Palestinian national struggle and in support of the work of the Committee. The Committee attaches the greatest importance to the continued and intensified mobilization of non-governmental organizations throughout the transitional period in order to monitor the relevant developments, to promote the full exercise of Palestinian rights in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions and to provide the needed economic and other assistance for institution-building. The Committee will seek to encourage participation in these endeavours by additional non-governmental organizations, particularly those active in the general fields of development and human rights. In consultation with the Division for Palestinian Rights and the non-governmental organization coordinating committees, the Committee will explore ways to enhance the effectiveness and impact of United Nations-sponsored non-governmental organization meetings and to promote intensified action by the non-governmental organization network.

92. The Committee is of the view that its programme of regional seminars and non-governmental organization meetings has provided a useful forum for a concrete and constructive analysis and debate of the most important issues concerning the question of Palestine, in particular thanks to the regular participation of Palestinian and Israeli personalities, together with experts, political and religious figures, media representatives and others, and has helped in educating public opinion and facilitating dialogue. The Committee intends to continue this programme in the light of the new situation, and considers that in the period ahead these meetings can provide a useful mechanism for in-depth consideration of the most important issues relevant to the process of transition of powers. Attention will be paid to structuring the format of the meetings for maximum usefulness, including the possibility of co-sponsoring them with academic institutions, non-governmental organizations or others. The Committee is also of the view that as soon as conditions permit, one such meeting could be held in Gaza or Jericho. The Committee has also taken note of the proposal that it consider convening a seminar on Palestinian needs in the light of the new developments, and will organize such a seminar as soon as possible at an appropriate venue.

93. The Committee considers that the publications and studies prepared by the Division for Palestinian Rights have performed a valuable function by providing

accurate information on the various aspects of the question of Palestine and a record of the activities sponsored by the Committee. The Committee considers that this aspect of the programme of work will be enhanced by the establishment of UNISPAL and will be of great usefulness to the Committee and to other users in the time ahead. In particular, the Committee considers that the bulletins of the Division should be expanded and restructured as follows:

(a) The monthly bulletin on activities of the United Nations system, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations will be enhanced to provide a comprehensive coverage of all relevant resolutions, statements and decisions, as well as summaries of the most significant activities;

(b) The bulletin entitled "Approaches towards the settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the question of Palestine" will contain a compilation of statements, reports and developments related to the ongoing bilateral and multilateral peace negotiations;

(c) The bulletin monitoring developments in the occupied Palestinian territory will become a chronology, in summary form, of all relevant developments in the occupied territory and outside, based on press reports.

94. The Committee also considers that the studies, information notes, reports and other material published by the Division should focus specifically on the main issues to be addressed by the Committee in order to enhance their usefulness at this important stage.

95. The Committee also considers that the special information programme on the question of Palestine of the Department of Public Information has been useful in raising the awareness of the international community concerning the complexities of the question and the situation in the Middle East in general. The Committee believes that the programme has also contributed to an atmosphere conducive to dialogue and supportive of the peace process. As the road to the establishment of a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East remains a long one, the Committee believes that the work of the United Nations in the field of information related to the question of Palestine will become even more important. The programme should follow and reflect realities related to the new experiences of the Palestinian people, provide assistance in the field of Palestinian media development and continue to disseminate information about the just cause of the Palestinian people, in addition to continuing its support of dialogue in the effort to build peace. During its forty-seventh session, the General Assembly adopted resolution 47/64 C by an overwhelming majority. It is the Committee's hope that this year, in the light of the new situation, the Assembly will be able to adopt the resolution on the special information programme on the question of Palestine by consensus.

96. The Committee will continue to strive to achieve maximum effectiveness in the implementation of its mandate and to adjust its work programme in the light of developments, in order to contribute, to the extent possible, to the realization of the common United Nations objective of achieving a just and lasting solution of the question of Palestine.

Notes

1/ Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 47/1 of 22 September 1992, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) did not participate in the work of the Committee.

2/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirty-first Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/31/35).

3/ Ibid., Thirty-second Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/32/35); ibid., Thirty-third Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/33/35); ibid., Thirty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/34/35 and Corr.1); ibid., Thirty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/35/35); ibid., Thirty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/36/35); ibid., Thirty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/37/35 and Corr.1); ibid., Thirty-eighth Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/38/35); ibid., Thirty-ninth Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/39/35); ibid., Fortieth Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/40/35); ibid., Forty-first Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/41/35); ibid., Forty-second Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/42/35); ibid., Forty-third Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/43/35); ibid., Forty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/44/35); ibid., Forty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/45/35); ibid., Forty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/46/35); and ibid., Forty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/47/35).

4/ United Nations Treaty Series, vol. 75, No. 973.

5/ Report of the International Conference on the Question of Palestine, Geneva, 29 August-7 September 1983 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.83.I.21), chap. I, sect. B.

6/ The observers at the Committee meetings were as follows: Algeria, Bangladesh, Bulgaria, China, Czechoslovakia*, Ecuador, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Mauritania, Morocco, Nicaragua, Niger, Qatar, Sri Lanka, Syrian Arab Republic, United Arab Emirates, Viet Nam, the League of Arab States and the Organization of the Islamic Conference. Palestine, represented by the Palestine Liberation Organization, as the representative of the Palestinian people, was also an observer.

7/ The membership of the Working Group was as follows: Afghanistan, Belarus, Cuba, Guinea, Guyana, India, Malta, Pakistan, Senegal, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine and Palestine, represented by the Palestine Liberation Organization, as the representative of the people directly concerned.

8/ S/25149.

9/ S/25258.

10/ S/25460.

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* Czechoslovakia (or the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic), an observer at the Committee meetings, ceased to exist on 31 December 1992. As of 1 January 1993, the membership of Czechoslovakia in the United Nations, including its subsidiary organs, ceased as well.

11/ See Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1993, Supplement No. 2 (E/1993/22), chap. II.

12/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 6 (A/48/6), vol. II.

ANNEX I

Recommendations of the Committee endorsed by the General Assembly at its thirty-first session*

I. Basic considerations and guidelines

59. The question of Palestine is at the heart of the Middle East problem, and consequently, the Committee stresses its belief that no solution in the Middle East can be envisaged which does not fully take into account the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people.

60. The legitimate and inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to return to their homes and property and to achieve self-determination, national independence and sovereignty are endorsed by the Committee in the conviction that the full implementation of those rights will contribute decisively to a comprehensive and final settlement of the Middle East crisis.

61. The participation of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), the representative of the Palestinian people, on an equal footing with other parties, on the basis of General Assembly resolutions 3236 (XXIX) and 3375 (XXX), is indispensable in all efforts, deliberations and conferences on the Middle East which are held under the auspices of the United Nations.

62. The Committee recalls the fundamental principle of the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force and stresses the consequent obligation for complete and speedy evacuation of any territory so occupied.

63. The Committee considers that it is the duty and responsibility of all concerned to enable the Palestinians to exercise their inalienable rights.

64. The Committee recommends an expanded and more influential role by the United Nations and its organs in promoting a just solution to the question of Palestine and in the implementation of such a solution. The Security Council, in particular, should take appropriate action to facilitate the exercise by the Palestinians of their right to return to their homes, lands and property. The Committee, furthermore, urges the Security Council to promote action towards a just solution, taking into account all the powers conferred on it by the Charter of the United Nations.

65. It is with this perspective in view and on the basis of the numerous resolutions of the United Nations, after due consideration of all the facts, proposals and suggestions advanced in the course of its deliberations, that the Committee submits its recommendations on the modalities for the implementation of the exercise of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

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* Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirty-first Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/31/35), paras. 59-72.

II. The right of return

66. The natural and inalienable right of Palestinians to return to their homes is recognized by resolution 194 (III), which the General Assembly has reaffirmed almost every year since its adoption. This right was also unanimously recognized by the Security Council in its resolution 237 (1967); the time for the urgent implementation of these regulations is long overdue.

67. Without prejudice to the right of all Palestinians to return to their homes, lands and property, the Committee considers that the programme of implementation of the exercise of this right may be carried out in two phases.

Phase one

68. The first phase involves the return to their homes of the Palestinians displaced as a result of the war of June 1967. The Committee recommends that:

(a) The Security Council should request the immediate implementation of its resolution 237 (1967) and that such implementation should not be related to any other condition;

(b) The resources of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and/or of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, suitably financed and mandated, may be employed to assist in returning to their homes. These agencies could also assist, in cooperation with the host countries and the PLO, in the identification of the displaced Palestinians.

Phase two

69. The second phase deals with the return to their homes of the Palestinians displaced between 1948 and 1967. The Committee recommends that:

(a) While the first phase is being implemented, the United Nations, in cooperation with the States directly involved, and the PLO as the interim representative of the Palestinian entity, should proceed to make the necessary arrangements to enable Palestinians displaced between 1948 and 1967 to exercise their right to return to their homes and property, in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions, particularly General Assembly resolution 194 (III);

(b) Palestinians choosing not to return to their homes should be paid just and equitable compensation as provided for in resolution 194 (III).

III. The right to self-determination, national independence and sovereignty

70. The Palestinian people has the inherent right to self-determination, national independence and sovereignty in Palestine. The Committee considers that the evacuation of the territories occupied by force and in violation of the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and relevant resolutions of the United Nations is a condition sine qua non for the exercise by the Palestinian people of its inalienable rights in Palestine. The Committee considers furthermore that, upon the return of the Palestinians to their homes and property and with the establishment of an independent Palestinian entity, the

Palestinian people will be able to exercise its rights to self-determination and to decide its form of government without external interference.

71. The Committee also feels that the United Nations has an historical duty and responsibility to render all assistance necessary to promote the economic development and prosperity of the Palestinian entity.

72. To those ends, the Committee recommends that:

(a) A timetable should be established by the Security Council for the complete withdrawal by Israeli occupation forces from those areas occupied in 1967; such withdrawal should be completed no later than 1 June 1977;

(b) The Security Council may need to provide temporary peace-keeping forces in order to facilitate the process of withdrawal;

(c) Israel should be requested by the Security Council to desist from the establishment of new settlements and to withdraw during this period from settlements established since 1967 in the occupied territories. Arab property and all essential services in those areas should be maintained intact;

(d) Israel should also be requested to abide scrupulously by the provisions of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949, and to declare, pending its speedy withdrawal from those territories, its recognition of the applicability of that Convention;

(e) The evacuated territories, with all property and services intact, should be taken over by the United Nations, which, with the cooperation of the League of Arab States, will subsequently hand over those evacuated areas to the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people;

(f) The United Nations should, if necessary, assist in establishing communications between Gaza and the West Bank;

(g) As soon as the independent Palestinian entity has been established, the United Nations, in cooperation with the States directly involved and the Palestinian entity, should, taking into account General Assembly resolution 3375 (XXX), make further arrangements for the full implementation of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, the resolution of outstanding problems and the establishment of a just and lasting peace in the region, in accordance with all relevant United Nations resolutions;

(h) The United Nations should provide the economic and technical assistance necessary for the consolidation of the Palestinian entity.

ANNEX II

United Nations Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People

(UNESCO headquarters, Paris, 26 to 29 April 1993)

1. The United Nations Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People was held at UNESCO headquarters, Paris, from 26 to 29 April 1993 in response to the request made to the Committee by the General Assembly in its resolution 47/170 of 22 December 1992.

2. The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People was represented by a delegation comprising: Mr. Kéba Birane Cissé (Senegal), Chairman of the Committee and head of delegation, who acted as Seminar Chairman; Mr. Alcibiades J. Hidalgo Basulto (Cuba), Vice-Chairman of the Committee and of the Seminar; Mr. Victor Camilleri (Malta), Rapporteur of the Committee and Vice-Chairman and Rapporteur of the Seminar; and Dr. Nasser Al-Kidwa, Permanent Observer for Palestine to the United Nations.

3. A total of eight meetings were held. Representatives of 67 Governments, including a number of donor countries, 17 United Nations bodies, organs and programmes involved in the programme of assistance to the Palestinian people, as well as 15 experts, accepted the Committee's invitation to participate in the Seminar, as did 19 non-governmental organizations as observers.

4. At the opening session, a statement was made on behalf of the Director-General of UNESCO, by Mr. K. Nhouyvanisvong, Assistant Director-General, a.i., for External Relations. A message from the Secretary-General of the United Nations was read by his representative, Mr. Hassen M. Fodha, Director of the United Nations Information Centre, Paris. Statements were also made by Mr. Kéba Birane Cissé, Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People; and by Mr. Ahmed Abu Ala, Director-General of the Department of Economic Affairs and Planning of the Palestine Liberation Organization. Statements were also made by representatives of intergovernmental organizations.

5. In the plenary sessions, the general themes addressed and the experts that took part were as follows:

(a) Assistance to the Palestinian people - priorities and needs:

(i) Programme for development of the Palestinian national economy for the years 1994-2000:

Mr. Yusif Sayigh (Palestinian)

(ii) The current situation in the occupied Palestinian territory:

Mr. Mahmoud Okashah (Palestinian)
Mr. Mohamed Shtayyeh (Palestinian)

(b) The role and experience of the United Nations system:

Mr. Samir Abdullah Saleh (Palestinian)

(c) The role and experience of regional organizations:

Mrs. Roselyne Bachelet (France)
Mrs. Ingbritt Irhammer (Sweden)

(d) The role and experience of countries involved in assistance projects in the occupied Palestinian territory:

Mr. Ibrahim Dakkak (Palestinian)
Mrs. Sarah Roy (United States of America)
Mrs. Suzette Verhoeven (Belgium)

(e) The role and experience of Palestinian and international non-governmental organizations:

Mr. Khaled Haidar Abdel Shafi (Palestinian)
Mr. Fritz Fröhlich (Austria)
Mr. Moath Al-Nabulsi (Palestinian)
Mr. Yousef Mahmoud Najem (Palestinian)

6. The report of the Seminar was issued in document A/48/168-E/1993/62 on 14 May 1993. The full text of the proceedings will be published in due course as a publication of the Division for Palestinian Rights.

7. The highlights of the discussions were summarized in the following concluding points circulated on the last day of the meeting:

(a) Participants commended the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for convening the Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People at a time of great importance for their future. They expressed their firm desire to make a concrete and useful contribution to helping the Palestinian people exercise its right to self-determination and development and to achieve a just peace. They considered that the wide and constructive participation in the Seminar by Governments, United Nations system organizations and agencies and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and agencies had greatly contributed to its success;

(b) It was felt that the Seminar had been useful in identifying the nature and extent of existing assistance programmes. Appreciation was expressed for the efforts already made by Governments, intergovernmental and regional organizations, United Nations system organizations and agencies, as well as non-governmental organizations in this regard, and for their readiness to continue and increase their financial and technical assistance in the fields of emergency, relief and development programmes;

(c) It was also felt that the Seminar had been useful for discussing the current and future needs of the Palestinian people, as articulated by the Palestinian representatives themselves, and for highlighting the importance of continued and increased assistance to the Palestinian people by the international community as a whole. Appreciation was expressed for the opportunity offered by the Seminar for a candid and constructive analysis of the experience of various donors and United Nations system organizations and agencies and of the problems encountered on the ground;

(d) Deliberations showed a growing expectation by the international community that a threshold had been reached in the long history of the Palestine

question, and that the Palestinian people would soon be able to take charge of its own future and to exercise its economic, as well as political, decision-making. Participants were of the view that a comprehensive Palestinian national development plan would be a major factor in achieving the independent development of the Palestinian people. They felt the need for undertaking coordination between various donors and United Nations system organizations and agencies and the Palestinian central authority. In this connection they welcomed the introduction of the Palestine Development Programme prepared by the Department of Economic Affairs and Planning of the PLO and the explanations given about it;

(e) Serious concern was expressed about the grave and deteriorating economic and social situation in the occupied Palestinian territory as a consequence of recent developments. Participants underlined that Israeli policies were principally responsible for the current situation. Israel, the occupying Power, had an obligation to respect the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention, Security Council resolutions and international human rights instruments which it had ratified;

(f) It was pointed out that the Israeli economic policy towards the occupied Palestinian territory had resulted in its underdevelopment and dependence on the Israeli economy. It was also stated that Israel had used its control over the occupied territory to prevent, or put obstacles in the way of, assistance projects aimed at promoting the independent development of the Palestinian people;

(g) Participants called on the international community as a whole to press Israel to lift the current siege in the occupied territory, to remove all barriers to development and to permit the free operation on the ground of United Nations system organizations and agencies and others delivering assistance to the Palestinian people;

(h) Participants were of the view that the international assistance programmes would be enhanced by greater and more effective coordination among United Nations system organizations and agencies and between them and other donors, and by elaboration of an overall strategy framework to guide their work;

(i) Participants discussed various courses of action that should be followed by the international community in order to make its contribution more effective. The view was expressed that international assistance should be targeted and delivered so as to meet Palestinian priorities and to help loosen the grip of the occupation and promote the independent development of the Palestinian people. It was noted with appreciation that certain Governments and organizations had been successful in delivering their assistance outside of Israeli control;

(j) The Seminar participants noted the experience of various organizations in the area of coordination and suggestions as to possible mechanisms made by speakers. There was general agreement that this question needed urgently to be discussed further at an appropriate level by all concerned in order to develop ways of using the limited resources of the international community as efficiently as possible. The Committee was therefore asked to recommend to the Secretary-General the convening of a meeting of representatives of United Nations system organizations and agencies and PLO officials to consider appropriate mechanisms to coordinate and channel assistance and to decide on priorities;

(k) Participants called for urgent action by the international community to meet the emergency needs of the Palestinian people living under occupation and identified a number of specific areas requiring such action, particularly in the Gaza Strip, as the current grave conditions threatened to exacerbate tension and violence in the area;

(l) It was also stressed that significant assistance projects that could help promote Palestinian development could and should be undertaken immediately, particularly in areas relating to development of production, employment generation and training, in the light of the strategies and priorities established in the Palestine Development Programme as explained in the course of the seminar. A call was made for increased assistance by the international community in order to enable the Palestinian people to achieve self-determination and self-reliance and thereby promote a just peace in the region.

ANNEX III

Ninth United Nations North American Seminar on the Question of Palestine

(New York, 28 and 29 June 1993)

1. The Ninth United Nations North American Seminar on the Question of Palestine, on the theme "Priorities for United Nations action", was held at United Nations Headquarters on 28 and 29 June 1993. The Seminar had been mandated by the General Assembly in its resolution 46/74 B of 11 December 1991.

2. Mr. Alcibiades Hidalgo Basulto (Cuba), Vice-Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, was Chairman and Rapporteur of the Seminar.

3. Three meetings were held, chaired by 3 moderators, and 10 experts presented papers on the theme of the Seminar. Representatives of 43 Governments, 7 United Nations specialized agencies and bodies, 2 intergovernmental organizations, as well as 10 non-governmental organizations, attended the meeting.

4. At the opening session, a statement was made by the Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Chinmaya R. Gharekhan, Under-Secretary-General and Special Political Adviser to the Secretary-General.
Mr. Alcibiades Hidalgo Basulto, Vice-Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and Chairman of the Seminar, also made a statement. A message from Mr. Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), was read out by Dr. Nasser M. Al-Kidwa, Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations.

5. Three panels were established. The panels, their moderators and panellists were as follows:

(a) Panel I. The United Nations and the implementation of international human rights instruments and relevant Security Council resolutions

Moderator: Mr. Andrew Whitley (United States)

Panellists: Ms. Daphna Golan (Israel)
Mr. Muhammad Hallaj (Palestinian)
Ms. Lynn Welchmann (United Kingdom)

(b) Panel II. The United Nations and the promotion of the economic development of the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem

Moderator: Mr. S. Kazemi (UNCTAD)

Panellists: Mr. Alcibiades Hidalgo Basulto
(Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People)
Mr. Roger Guarda (UNDP)
Ms. Lee O'Brien (UNRWA)
Mr. Ephraim Ahiram (Israel)
Mr. Fadle Naqib (Palestinian)

(c) Panel III. The United Nations and the peace process

Moderator: Mr. Richard Curtiss (United States of America)

Panellists: Mr. Johan Nordenfelt (United Nations)
Mr. Richard Curtiss (United States of America)
Dr. Nabil A. Elaraby (Egypt)
Mr. Nabil Qassis (Palestinian)
Mr. Shibley Telhami (United States of America)

6. The report summarizing the papers and the discussion will be published in due course as a publication of the Division for Palestinian Rights.

ANNEX IV

Tenth United Nations North American Regional Non-Governmental Organizations Symposium on the Question of Palestine

(New York, 30 June to 2 July 1993)

1. The Tenth United Nations North American Regional Non-Governmental Organizations Symposium on the Question of Palestine was held at United Nations Headquarters from 30 June to 2 July 1993 in accordance with General Assembly resolution 46/74 B, under the auspices of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

2. The Symposium was attended by representatives of 56 non-governmental organizations from Canada and the United States of America, and 7 such organizations participated as observers. Nine panellists and 20 workshop facilitators and resource persons made presentations. Representatives of several Governments, United Nations bodies and intergovernmental organizations also attended the Symposium as observers. Mr. Alcibiades Hidalgo Basulto (Cuba), Vice-Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, chaired the opening and closing sessions of the Symposium. The opening session was also addressed by the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations, who read out a message from Mr. Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization. Mr. Larry Ekin, Chairman of the North American Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine served as moderator of the Symposium. The Reverend Ibrahim Ayyad, President of the Palestine Committee for NGOs, addressed the closing session of the Symposium.

3. The programme for the Symposium, on the theme "Building for peace and Palestine: priorities for the second decade of the NGO movement", was drawn up by the Committee in consultation with the North American Coordinating Committee as follows:

(a) Panel 1. Building for peace and Palestine: priorities for the second decade of the NGO movement

Mr. Don Betz (United States of America)
Mr. Paul Findley (United States of America)
Mr. Asmi Bishara (Palestinian)

(b) Panel 2. Rights, resources, refugees: the need for protection

Mr. Jonathan Kuttab (Palestinian)
Mr. Mohammad Hallaj (Palestinian)
Mr. Atif Kubursi (Canada)

(c) Panel 3. Ending the occupation: a prelude to peace and security

Ms. Roni Ben Efrat (Israel)
Mr. Mohammad Hallaj (Palestinian)

(d) Panel 4. NGO priorities for the second decade

Mr. Don Betz (United States of America)
Ms. Mia Adjali (United States of America)
Mr. Jim Graff (Canada)

4. Seven standing committees of non-governmental organizations were organized to develop NGO networking and action on the following issues: government and public policy; human rights and international law; material aid and economic development; media and public education; mobilizing religious organizations; mobilizing labour; and mobilizing women's organizations.

5. Five workshops were held on the following themes: Media: skills and stereotypes; The Clinton Administration and the U.S. Congress: assessing the new opportunities; Assuring protection: United Nations resolutions and the Fourth Geneva Convention; Seeds of a new society: the welfare of women and children under occupation; and Exiles, refugees and "invisible transfers".

6. The report of the Symposium will be issued as a publication of the Division for Palestinian Rights.

ANNEX V

Seventh United Nations European Regional Non-Governmental Organizations Symposium on the Question of Palestine

(Vienna, 23 and 24 August 1993)

1. The Seventh United Nations European Regional Non-Governmental Organizations Symposium on the Question of Palestine was held at the Austria Centre, Vienna, on 23 and 24 August 1993 in accordance with General Assembly resolution 46/74 B, under the auspices of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

2. The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People was represented by a delegation comprising Mr. Kéba Birane Cissé (Senegal), Chairman of the Committee and head of delegation; Mr. Alcibiades Hidalgo Basulto (Cuba), Vice-Chairman; Mr. Ravan A. G. Farhadi (Afghanistan), Vice-Chairman; Mr. Joseph Cassar (Malta), Rapporteur of the Committee; and Dr. M. Nasser Al-Kidwa (Palestine).

3. The Symposium was attended by the representatives of 38 non-governmental organizations from the European region, and 15 such organizations participated as observers. Eight panellists and workshop resource persons made presentations. Representatives of a number of Governments, United Nations bodies and intergovernmental organizations also attended the Symposium as observers. Mr. Kéba Birane Cissé (Senegal), Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, chaired the opening and closing sessions of the Symposium. The opening session was also addressed by the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations at Vienna, Mr. Faisal Aweidah, who read out a message from Mr. Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization, and by Mr. Bernard Mills, Chairman of the European Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine, who served as moderator of the Symposium.

4. The programme for the Symposium, on the theme "The Middle East peace process: Palestinian rights and development - a challenge to Europe", was drawn up by the Committee in consultation with the European Coordinating Committee as follows:

Plenary Session. Palestine - the current situation

Dr. Haider Abdel Shafi (Palestinian)
Mrs. Naomi Chazan (Israel)
Mr. Johan Nordenfelt (United Nations)

5. Two workshops were held on the following topics:

(a) Palestinian national and human rights

Mr. Fateh Azzam (Palestinian)
Mrs. Luisa Sirvent (Spain)
Mrs. Maria Gazi (Greece)

(b) Palestinian development

Mr. Khalil Hindi (Palestinian)
Rev. Paul Hoffman (Germany)

6. The non-governmental organizations participating in the Symposium adopted a final declaration as well as action-oriented proposals and elected a new 11-member European Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine and one honorary member. The report of the Symposium will be issued as a publication of the Division for Palestinian Rights.

7. The non-governmental organizations participating in the Symposium adopted the following declaration:

Declaration

We, the representatives of the non-governmental organizations participating in the Seventh United Nations European Regional Non-Governmental Organizations Symposium, held at the Austria Centre at Vienna on 23 and 24 August 1993, reaffirm our support to the Palestinian people and their courageous intifadah and their just and incessant struggle for self-determination and the establishment of their own independent sovereign State of Palestine.

The experience of the two years that have passed since the launching at Madrid of talks between Arabs and Israelis has reinforced our conviction that peace will not come until the Palestinian people, through their representative, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), are enabled to determine their own future. Serious negotiations have yet to begin and the terms of reference of these talks, particularly Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), have yet to be honoured.

Worse, despite the ongoing peace talks, the situation has further deteriorated in the occupied Palestinian territory. This has been documented in the reports and papers presented by eminent panellists and resource persons.

(a) From the beginning of the peace talks to this day an ever-growing number of civilians is being killed and injured by the Israeli occupying military forces and undercover units;

(b) The continuing arrests and torture of Palestinians exacerbate the already intolerable human rights situation in the occupied Palestinian territories;

(c) In December 1992, 415 Palestinians were deported to the Israeli-Lebanese border, and, in spite of the worldwide outcry, Israel has refused to comply with Security Council resolution 799 (1992) calling for their immediate return, and 396 deportees are still encamped on the Lebanese border as we are meeting;

(d) The recent closure of the territories is the latest manifestation of illegal collective punishment. It has divided Palestine into four parts, separating the south and the north of the West Bank, isolating the Gaza Strip and Jerusalem, and severely restricting the movement of the Palestinian population of 2 million people. The road blocks have created

enclaves, depriving the people living in them of access to family, work, schools and medical care. This has been the most damaging and disruptive policy of the occupying Power since 1967;

(e) In spite of the Israeli Government's announcement of a settlement freeze, there are at the moment more than 19,500 housing units under construction, and highways and roads are continuously being built to link settlements with one another and with the State of Israel;

(f) House demolitions have increased; in the Gaza Strip more than 50 houses have been blown up by anti-tank rockets.

We condemn all the above-mentioned Israeli policies and practices which violate the Fourth Geneva Convention. We urge the Secretary-General of the United Nations to convene the High Contracting Parties to the Convention to decide ways and means to ensure Israel's compliance with the aforesaid Convention, in accordance with Security Council resolution 681 (1990) of 20 December 1990.

We call upon the European Governments and the European Community to take all necessary political and economic measures in order to impose on Israel the respect of the Fourth Geneva Convention. We demand that the European Community freeze all economic and scientific protocols and preferential agreements with Israel until it complies.

We are deeply concerned about the stalemate in the Palestinian-Israeli talks. Without Palestinian-Israeli agreement, there can be no real movement in either the bilateral or multilateral talks. We note that concessions to facilitate negotiations have been made by the Palestinians with no meaningful response from the Israelis.

We note with dismay the biased attitude of the current Administration of the United States of America, which came into the open during the ninth and tenth rounds of talks. We believe the United States has a responsibility, now that it is effectively the only sponsor, to respect the terms of reference of the Madrid process, which require full implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

We support the call in successive United Nations resolutions for an international peace conference with the participation of the five permanent members of the Security Council and all parties to the conflict, including the Palestine Liberation Organization on an equal footing and with equal rights in order to achieve a comprehensive and lasting peace in the region.

We reiterate our support for all Israeli non-governmental organizations and peace forces, which have undertaken the hard task of raising the awareness of Israeli society in support of Palestinian national and human rights.

At the same time, we call attention to the ongoing discrimination by the Israeli Government and local authorities against the Palestinian citizens of Israel.

We strongly condemn Israel's military raids against Lebanese villages and Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon, which have caused the death of 150 civilians and the injury of hundreds, and made thousands homeless. We urge the Security Council to ensure that Israel fully complies with

Security Council resolution 425 (1978) of 19 March 1978, which provides for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of Israeli forces from Lebanon.

We, as European non-governmental organizations, call upon our Governments, and particularly upon the European members of the Security Council, to lend their full support to efforts aimed at achieving a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East and to take action to end a situation which perpetuates injustice and threatens the security of Europe. Peace cannot prevail in the area until Israel complies with all United Nations resolutions and withdraws from the occupied Palestinian territories, Lebanon and the Golan Heights.

We, European non-governmental organizations, welcome the Palestine Development Plan and pledge ourselves to sustain and encourage all Palestinian efforts in the field of development. We shall urge European and other Governments, United Nations bodies, etc., through all channels and all levels to respond to Palestinian needs.

We, European non-governmental organizations, aware of the urgency of the situation, pledge to intensify our concerted efforts for the achievement of our objectives as outlined in this declaration.

We express our appreciation to the International Coordinating Committee for Non-Governmental Organizations on the Question of Palestine and the North American Coordinating Committee for Non-Governmental Organizations on the Question of Palestine for their Peace Conference Information Project; to the Coordinating Committee of International Non-Governmental Organizations in the Occupied Palestinian Territories for their reports on the human rights situation in the occupied Palestinian territories, and for the services rendered by the Network for European Non-Governmental Organizations in the Occupied Territories in the field of development. All these information services have facilitated the work of the European Coordinating Committee for Non-Governmental Organizations on the Question of Palestine and individual non-governmental organizations.

We warmly thank the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for convening this Symposium and for its relentless and continuous efforts to enable the Palestinian people to achieve their inalienable rights. We request its chairman Mr. Kéba Birane Cissé to convey this declaration to the General Assembly at its forty-eighth session as part of the Committee's report and we request the convening of a European Symposium in 1994.

We extend our thanks to the Division of Palestinian Rights, its secretariat, the various departments and offices of the United Nations Office at Vienna and the interpreters who assisted us.

We wish to thank the Austrian Government for hosting this Symposium at Vienna and making available the Austria Centre for our deliberations.

ANNEX VI

Tenth United Nations International Non-Governmental Organizations Meeting on the Question of Palestine

(Vienna, 25 to 27 August 1993)

1. The Tenth United Nations International Non-Governmental Organizations Meeting on the Question of Palestine was held at the Austria Centre, Vienna, from 25 to 27 August 1993 in accordance with General Assembly resolution 46/74 B, under the auspices of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

2. The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People was represented by a delegation comprising Mr. Kéba Birane Cissé (Senegal), Chairman of the Committee and head of delegation; Mr. Alcibiades Hidalgo Basulto (Cuba), Vice-Chairman; Mr. Ravan A. G. Farhadi (Afghanistan), Vice-Chairman; Mr. Joseph Cassar (Malta), Rapporteur of the Committee; and Dr. M. Nasser Al-Kidwa (Palestine).

3. The Meeting was attended by representatives of 79 non-governmental organizations from all regions of the world, and 6 such organizations participated as observers. Nineteen panellists made presentations. Representatives of a number of Governments, United Nations bodies and intergovernmental organizations, as well as the representatives of the regional coordinating committees, also attended the Meeting as observers.

4. Mr. Kéba Birane Cissé, Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, chaired the opening and closing sessions of the Meeting. The opening session was also addressed by Mr. Wolfgang Wolte, Deputy-Secretary-General and Director-General for European Integration and Economic Policy in the Austrian Ministry for Foreign Affairs. Mr. Don Betz, Chairman of the International Coordinating Committee of Non-Governmental Organizations on the Question of Palestine, acted as moderator of the Meeting.

5. The programme for the Meeting, on the theme "Renewing the United Nations - NGO commitment to Palestinian national and human rights", was drawn up by the Committee in consultation with the International Coordinating Committee as follows:

(a) Panel 1. Political update: obstacles to peace

Dr. Haider Abdel Shafi (Palestinian)
Mrs. Naomi Chazan (Israel)
Mr. Naseer Aruri (United States of America)

(b) Panel 2. Urgent quest for independence: protection and end of occupation

Mr. Pablo de la Vega (Ecuador)
Mr. Raji Sourani (Palestinian)
Mr. Avigdor Feldman (Israel)
Mr. Mohammed Ali Taha (Palestinian)
Mr. Hussein Abu Hussein (Israel)

(c) Panel 3. Back to the future - a decade of United Nations/NGO networking

Mr. Jean Marie Lambert (France)
Ms. Adrien Wing (United States of America)
Mr. Hans-Peter Kotthaus (UNRWA)
Mr. Romesh Chandra (India)
Mr. Akira Uriu (UNIDO)

(d) Panel 4. NGO Forum: who is doing what?

Mrs. Samiha Khalil (Palestinian)
Mr. Fritz Froelich (Austria)
Mrs. Ruth Cohen (Israel)
Mr. Jim Graff (Canada)

(e) Panel 5. Future strategies and the role of NGOs

Mr. Don Betz (United States of America)
Mr. Zehdi L. Terzi (Palestinian)

6. The non-governmental organizations participating in the Meeting adopted a final Declaration, as well as action-oriented proposals, and elected a new International Coordinating Committee for Non-Governmental Organizations on the Question of Palestine. The report of the Meeting will be issued as a publication of the Division for Palestinian Rights.

7. The Declaration adopted by participant non-governmental organizations reads as follows:

Declaration

We, the Non-Governmental Organizations gathered at the Tenth United Nations International Non-Governmental Organizations Meeting on the Question of Palestine are aware that we have convened at a critical moment in the struggle of the Palestinian people for freedom and statehood.

We unconditionally affirm the right of the Palestinian people to return, self-determination and statehood. We affirm our conviction that the establishment of an independent Palestinian State alongside Israel is the most suitable means for securing a just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

We call upon the Israeli Government and people to recognize the rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination, statehood, and security within their homeland, and the right of Palestinian refugees to return, thereby assuring the mutual recognition of the equal rights of both peoples. We demand the withdrawal of Israel from the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, and other occupied Arab territories.

We support the peace process which began at Madrid in 1991 under the sponsorship of the United States of America and the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics as an attempt to reach a just and comprehensive settlement in the Middle East on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and the principle of land for peace. However,

many obstacles have inhibited the success of this process. We affirm that any negotiating process leading to peace requires not only the recognition of the principles found in these resolutions as the basis for negotiation, but also the direct participation of the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, the effective participation of the United Nations and the inclusion of the European Community as co-sponsor. It is our conviction that the principles embodied in the call for the United Nations Peace Conference on the Middle East must be honoured in order to establish a just and lasting peace. We believe the lack of progress to date of the peace process is the direct responsibility of the Government of Israel with the support of the United States.

We consider it most urgent that the United Nations provide immediate and sustained protection for the Palestinians under occupation. We call upon Israel immediately to recognize the de jure applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 to all the territories occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem. The protections and guarantees of the Convention must be recognized and implemented without delay. We call upon the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention to apply sanctions to ensure Israel's compliance with provisions of that Convention.

We express our full support for the ongoing intifadah, which constitutes the Palestinian people's inherent right to resist colonization and military occupation. Consequently, Israel's efforts to suppress the intifadah are illegitimate:

(a) Further, we urge that non-governmental organizations concerned with protection for the Palestinians should establish permanent monitoring and witness groups in the occupied territories in order to enhance public awareness and to pressure governments to urge Israel to end the occupation.

(b) We condemn Israel's occupation and colonization of the Golan Heights, its continuing brutal occupation of southern Lebanon and its flagrant violations of the Fourth Geneva Convention in those regions.

We denounce the settlements policy of the Government of Israel in the West Bank, Gaza and Golan Heights and the increased settlement activities in occupied East Jerusalem. These settlements are illegal and in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, Security Council resolution 465 (1980) and other relevant Security Council resolutions and should be dismantled. We strongly protest against the decision of the United States Administration to grant Israel 10 billion dollars in loan guarantees without any pledge from the Israeli Government that it will cease building settlements which are illegal in the occupied territories, including East Jerusalem. We do not accept the distinction between political and security settlements offered by the Israeli Government, as it appears to be a tactic to avoid returning all the Palestinian territories occupied in 1967 and remains an obstacle to peace. We call upon all Governments not to donate or pledge any financial or other support to Israel until it officially pledges to cease all settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan Heights.

We demand the implementation of the right of the Palestinians displaced since 1967 to return to their homes. In this context, we affirm the right of families to be reunited and to remain together in their

homeland. We also call for the immediate return of all Palestinian deportees.

We note that in spite of Security Council resolution 799 (1992), the expellees of December 1992 remain in exile in Lebanon. We condemn this arrogant refusal to observe this demand by the Security Council for their return. We call upon the Security Council to implement this resolution by taking all necessary measures to ensure the immediate and safe return of the expellees and their protection against arbitrary arrest and detention.

We also call upon Israel to recognize the rights of Palestinians who are citizens of Israel to full equality, rights for which they have been struggling since 1948. We denounce the ongoing discrimination against Palestinians who are citizens of Israel. We condemn the Israeli confiscation of their lands, which has recently accelerated, and the denial of legal municipal recognition to many Palestinian villages and communities in Israel. The national and human rights of the Palestinians who are citizens of Israel must be considered in any further comprehensive solution to the Palestinian problem.

We express our solidarity with Israeli peace forces struggling for the equality of all citizens of Israel and for an end to Israeli occupation of Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and for the realization of the right of self-determination for the Palestinian people.

We strongly condemn the continuing Israeli policy of systematic iron-fist repression against the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territory. We point out that at least 14,000 Palestinians remain imprisoned, although some have fully served the terms of their sentences.

We condemn the summary executions carried out by the undercover army units in the occupied Palestinian territory. We demand that all operations, as well as all standing orders and regulations relating to the undercover army units, be cancelled and that the so-called "special units" be disbanded immediately.

We demand that Israel rescind all standing military orders that have codified human rights abuses and legalized them, particularly military orders that sanction administrative detention, restrictions of fundamental freedoms and rights such as free speech, freedom of assembly and association, freedom of movement and travel, academic freedom, excessive taxation and other severe restrictions on the free development of the economy and the society of the occupied Palestinian territories:

(a) We demand that Israeli authorities stop the killing and injuring of civilians, collective punishment, the sealing and demolition of houses, detention, torture and imprisonment without trial, expropriation of land and water resources, the closing of educational institutions, curfews and restrictions on the free movement of Palestinians;

(b) We further call upon Israel to rescind its illegal closures of the occupied Palestinian territory and to permit the freedom of movement of Palestinians within those territories with free access to occupied East Jerusalem. We call for the support of all believers for whom Jerusalem is a living centre of their faiths to protect the presence of Muslims and Christians against Israeli efforts to annex Arab East Jerusalem.

We condemn Israel's recent massive aggression against Lebanon. We deplore the failure of the international community to take appropriate actions to protect the Lebanese and Palestinian civilians subjected to massive bombardment, displacement and dispossession. We call upon the Security Council to implement its resolution 425 (1978) requiring Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon.

We support comprehensive measures to control and eliminate weapons of mass destruction worldwide, especially in the Middle East. The international community should strongly urge Israel to sign and ratify the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. We are concerned about the risks to the natural environment which Israel's continued nuclear weapons programme poses. In this context, non-governmental organizations are urged to support the campaign for Mordechai Vanunu's immediate release from the brutal and inhumane confinement he is suffering for alerting the world to the Israeli nuclear threat.

We address a call to all the countries, especially the Gulf countries, that have drastically reduced their support to Palestinian organizations to re-examine their position and renew their support to the Palestinian people and its sole legitimate representative, the PLO.

We warmly thank the Committee for convening this international meeting, and we greatly appreciate the presence of the Committee delegation. We extend a warm thanks to Mr. Kéba Birane Cissé, Chairman of the Committee. We thank the Division for Palestinian Rights and all others of the United Nations Secretariat, including the interpreters, who so valuably assisted us. We express our appreciation to the distinguished experts who spoke here and added to our deliberations. We also address our appreciation to the Government of Austria for having generously hosted this Meeting.

We request the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People to convey this Declaration to the General Assembly at its forty-eighth session as part of the Committee's report.

ANNEX VII

Seventh United Nations African Seminar and Fourth United Nations African Non-Governmental Organizations Symposium on the Question of Palestine

(Dakar, Senegal, 30 August to 3 September 1993)

1. The Seventh United Nations African Seminar on the Question of Palestine (Thirty-fourth United Nations Seminar) and the Fourth United Nations African Non-Governmental Organizations Symposium on the Question of Palestine were held at Dakar, Senegal, from 30 August to 3 September 1993, in accordance with the provisions of General Assembly resolution 46/74 B of 11 December 1991. The Seminar and the NGO Symposium took place for the most part as a combined event.

2. The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People was represented by a delegation comprising Mr. Kéba Birane Cissé (Senegal), Chairman of the Committee and Chairman of the Seminar; Mr. Joseph Cassar (Malta), Rapporteur of the Committee and Vice-Chairman and Rapporteur of the Seminar; Mr. Nouhoum Samassekou (Mali), Vice-Chairman of the Seminar; Mr. Utoyo Yamtomo, Ambassador of Indonesia to Senegal; and Dr. Nasser Al-Kidwa, Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations.

3. At the opening of the Seminar and NGO Symposium a statement was made by Mr. Ousmane Tanor Dieng, Minister of State and Minister for Presidential Affairs and Services of Senegal. Statements were also made by Joseph Verner Reed, representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations; the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People; the representative of Palestine to Senegal, who read out a message from the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization; and the representative of the African Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine.

4. A total of nine plenary meetings were held, and 19 experts from the African continent, as well as Palestinians and Israelis, presented papers on various aspects of the question of Palestine. Representatives of 23 Governments, 6 United Nations specialized agencies and intergovernmental organizations, as well as 18 non-governmental organizations, attended the Seminar and NGO Symposium.

5. Four panels were established. The panels and their experts were as follows:

(a) Panel I. Towards a just solution of the question of Palestine

(i) The current situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem

Dr. Ahmad Yaziji (Palestinian)
Mr. Eitan Felner (Israel)

(ii) The role of Africa in promoting a just, comprehensive and lasting solution of the question of Palestine

Mr. Hedi Ben Nasr (Tunisia)
Mr. Chitsaka Chipaziwa (Zimbabwe)
Mr. Dianguina dit Yaya Doucouré (Mali)
Mr. Latyr Kamara (Senegal)
Mr. K. B. S. Simpson (Ghana)

(iii) Regional organizations and the political, economic and human rights dimension of the question of Palestine

Mr. Khaled Mohammed Khaled (League of Arab States)

(b) Panel II. Building peace in Jerusalem - the Holy City of three religions

Rev. Father Bishara Al-Lahham (Palestinian)
Sheikh Ekrema Sabri (Palestinian)
Rabbi David Forman (Israel)

(c) Panel III. Towards self-determination and statehood

(i) Palestine - dynamics of State-building

Mr. Latif Dori (Israel)
Mr. Essa Moosa (South Africa)
Mr. O. R. Kaakunga (Namibia)

(ii) The role of the media and public opinion in nation-building

Mr. Bara Diouf (Senegal)
Mr. Mohamed Larbi Messari (Morocco)

(d) Panel IV. The need to revive the economy in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem: mobilization of international assistance to promote self-reliance and sustainable development

Mr. Ibrahim Dakkak (Palestinian)
Ms. Kathy Bergen (Canada)

6. In addition to the panels held jointly with the Seminar, two workshops specifically related to non-governmental organizations activities were established to consider the following topics:

(a) Actions by African non-governmental organizations to promote efforts to put an end to Israel's violations of human rights of the Palestinian people

Mr. Ousmane Camara (Guinea)

(b) Mobilization and networking by non-governmental organizations to promote a just, comprehensive and lasting solution of the question of Palestine

Ms. Kathy Bergen (Canada)

The NGO participants adopted action-oriented proposals emanating from the workshops. They also decided to extend the term of office of the African Coordinating Committee for Non-Governmental Organizations on the Question of Palestine until the next African Regional Symposium on the Question of Palestine and to increase its membership.

7. The Seminar and NGO Symposium adopted conclusions and recommendations as well as a motion of thanks to the Government and people of Senegal. The report containing the summaries of the presentations will be published in due course as a publication of the Division for Palestinian Rights.

Conclusions and recommendations

8. In accordance with its mandate, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People convened the African Seminar and NGO Symposium on the Question of Palestine at Dakar, Senegal, from 30 August to 3 September 1993. A number of African, Palestinian and Israeli experts, as well as representatives from Governments, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations, were invited to participate. The Seminar and NGO Symposium had for its main theme "Africa, the Middle East and the question of Palestine", and met in various panels relating to: a just solution of the question of Palestine; Jerusalem; self-determination and statehood; and the need to revive the economy of the occupied territory. Non-governmental organization workshops were also held to promote action by African non-governmental organizations on the question of Palestine. During the meeting, participants were also informed of new developments relating to the peace process and held an exchange of views thereon.

9. Participants reviewed the current situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem. They expressed grave concern at the continuing human rights abuses in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. They called on Israel, the occupying Power, to recognize the de jure applicability of the Convention to the occupied territory and to implement it immediately and fully. They considered that this was a fundamental obligation under international law and the relevant Security Council resolutions. They called upon the international community, and the High Contracting Parties in particular, to assume their obligations under the Convention to ensure respect for its provisions in all circumstances and to provide international protection for the Palestinians until the end of the occupation.

10. Participants called on the Israeli Government to take a number of immediate measures as a step towards peace and reconciliation between the two peoples, in particular the release of all political prisoners and administrative detainees, the return of deportees, an end to the activities of undercover units and other repressive actions of the military forces and an end to the destruction of houses; as well as to take other measures to restore respect for human rights and lighten the burden of occupation during the transition period.

11. Grave concern was expressed at the continued closure of the occupied territory and the separation of East Jerusalem from the West Bank, which had resulted in dividing the occupied territory into four separate areas. Furthermore, this had caused loss of employment and hardships for large numbers of Palestinian workers and had drastically limited access by Palestinians to places of worship, schools, health care facilities and utility services. Participants were especially alarmed at reports of the dramatic situation in

Gaza, in particular the grave aggravation in the health condition of the population, the environmental deterioration and the lack of water. The participants called for closer cooperation between non-governmental organizations and the Palestine Health Council to identify needs and assistance programmes. Israel was urgently called upon to end the blockade of the occupied territory and to restore full access to Jerusalem.

12. Participants engaged in a frank and constructive debate on the role of Africa in promoting a just, comprehensive and lasting solution of the question of Palestine, as well as the role of regional organizations in this respect.

13. It was pointed out that African countries, which were still for the most part under colonial rule at the time of the partition of Palestine in 1947, felt a fundamental kinship with the Palestinian people. Their solidarity was rooted in a moral and ethical position and a clear understanding of the historical and political situation. Following their independence and the establishment of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the African countries had been able to lend increasingly concerted and coordinated support to the Palestinian struggle at the United Nations and in other international forums. Participants acknowledged Africa's continued principled position and steadfast support for the achievement of Palestinian rights.

14. Past experience and future possibilities in the relations between African and Arab countries were also reviewed. It was stressed that it was of the greatest importance to strengthen cooperation, economic and otherwise, between African and Arab countries, in order to stimulate mutually beneficial development.

15. Participants appreciated and affirmed the continuing work and involvement of the African and international non-governmental organizations working on the question of Palestine. The importance of consolidating active channels of communication between Palestinian and African organizations was emphasized.

16. Participants examined the problem of how to build peace in Jerusalem, Holy City of three religions and of great spiritual value, without monopoly by any quarter. The Israeli policy of annexation and judaization of Jerusalem, its encirclement with Jewish settlements and its separation from the rest of the occupied territories in recent months, caused the most serious concern. Participants stressed that a just solution regarding Jerusalem was indispensable for a settlement of the question of Palestine and called for an end to the policy of settlement, the reopening of the city, freedom of access to the holy places and respect for religious liberties, pending negotiations on a final settlement. Support was expressed in this regard for the work of the Al-Quds Committee of the Organization of the Islamic Conference. Calls were also made for an effective involvement by leaders from the three religions in promoting a peaceful solution to the problem of Jerusalem.

17. Participants discussed the achievement of the right to self-determination and independence of the Palestinian people and the dynamics of State and nation-building, including the role of the media and public opinion. It was emphasized that the right to self-determination was an inalienable right recognized in international law. Participants expressed support for the intifadah, through which the Palestinian people had expressed its national consensus in rejection of the occupation and for the establishment of a Palestinian State. The intifadah had also helped strengthen the institutional mechanisms and the social and political foundations for future statehood, under the leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organization.

18. It was pointed out that there were many parallels between the struggle of the Palestinian people and that of the oppressed people of South Africa and that use could be made of their experience. The importance of providing information and mobilizing international sympathy and support for the Palestinian cause was stressed in that regard.

19. It was also emphasized that the Palestinian information media, both in the occupied territories, and in the diaspora, were playing an indispensable role in expressing the concerns and national personality of the Palestinian people and in keeping the national consciousness alive. The occupying Power was called upon to cease all harassment of Palestinian journalists and foreign journalists attempting to provide information on the situation in the occupied territory to the outside public. It was suggested that the Committee organize a seminar with the participation of mass media from the African and other regions and representatives of the Palestinian media to discuss strategies and means of practical cooperation in order to advance the cause of the Palestinian people.

20. Participants emphasized that a revival of the Palestinian economy and its independent development were essential underpinnings for the full exercise of the right to self-determination of the Palestinian people and the building of an independent State. Israel was called upon to end its policy of control and subordination of the Palestinian economy and resources, in particular water resources and land, and to remove the obstacles to development projects of non-governmental organizations and other international donors. It was concluded that while immediate and substantial economic and financial assistance was desirable, only the end of occupation and the restoration to the Palestinian people of complete control over its national resources would ensure the realization of self-reliant and sustainable development.

21. Participants called for unimpeded access of United Nations bodies and specialized agencies to the occupied Palestinian territory in order to carry out their programmes and studies. The need was felt for the creation of an appropriate mechanism to undertake coordination between various donors and United Nations system organizations and agencies and the Palestine Liberation Organization. It was suggested that the Committee organize, under its auspices, round-tables on economic revitalization of the occupied Palestinian territory, which would be of particular importance in the transitional period. Various practical measures to assist the Palestinian people living in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, were suggested, such as twinning of towns and institutions like universities, hospitals and others, to provide for exchange of staff, students, teachers and various technical assistance. Participants called upon the international community, particularly the industrial countries, to increase their contribution to the budget of UNRWA to enable it to fulfil its responsibility towards the Palestinian people.

22. Participants were apprised of the turning point in the peace process which took place while the meeting was in progress, and the draft declaration of principles by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization providing for initial steps towards Palestinian self-government, the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Jericho and the Gaza Strip and a framework for negotiations leading to a permanent settlement. In welcoming and supporting this evolution, they considered that courage and leadership were required at this crucial stage in the peace process. This development was viewed as a first step to a just and comprehensive peace based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), and the realization of the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to self-determination.

23. They stressed that it was essential for the international community as a whole to intensify further its support for the Palestinian people and its legitimate representative, the PLO, during the difficult transition process ahead. They called for effective help to be given to the Palestinian people in constructing its future institutions and rebuilding its social infrastructure and economy, which were indispensable foundations for the full exercise of its inalienable rights.

24. Participants reaffirmed the permanent responsibility of the United Nations towards a just and comprehensive solution of the question of Palestine. In this regard, they stressed the importance of the role of the United Nations in providing every assistance with the aim of contributing to the establishment of peace in the Middle East.

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